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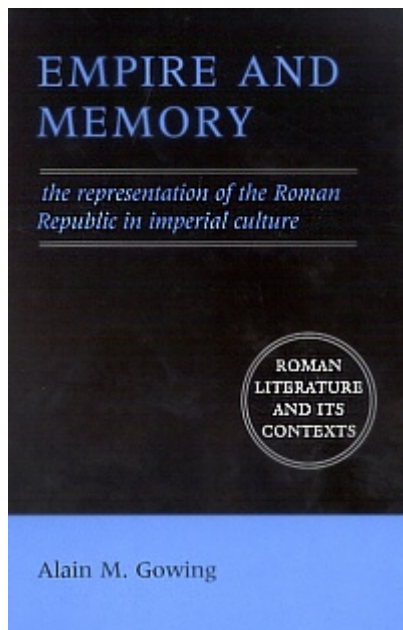
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## Alain M. Gowing: Empire and Memory



This is an intelligent and stimulating book. Original, concise and consistently well-written, it also has the theoretical depth which characterises the *Roman Literature and its Contexts* series. In fact, this series explicitly states as its purpose to offer a forum to sharpen readings of Latin texts by placing them in wider contexts, and has already produced several wonderful works. [1] The volume under discussion fits well among them. Gowing's purpose is to analyse ways in which "the Roman Republic was memorialized in early imperial literature and culture" (xiii), through some illustrative cases that show continuity and change. Much influenced by notions of collective and personal memory, he builds upon earlier work on the subject whilst continuously emphasising the specific (and changing) context of imperial Rome. [2]

The structure of the book is clear. A first, methodological chapter ("Historia / memoria", 1-27), which also sets out the Augustan framework, is followed by a chapter on the "Res publica Tiberiana" (28-66), essentially a discussion on how the Republic is remembered in Velleius Paterculus and Valerius Maximus. "Caesar, now be still", the third chapter (67-101), analyses the Neronian period through Seneca and Lucan, whereas chapter 4 ("Rome's new past", 102-131) briefly touches upon Flavian Rome - with emphasis on Quintillian - before focusing more fully on the Trajanic period by analysing Tacitus' *Dialogus* and Pliny's *Panegyric*. A final chapter ("Remembering Rome", 132-159) looks at continuity and change in the way that the Roman Republic was remembered, by balancing the *Fora* of Augustus and Trajan against each other.

The book, thus, step by step moves away from the 'historical' Republic, and analyses how this affects the 'remembered' Republic. At first, Gowing rightly emphasises, authors try to show continuity. For Velleius, there was no clear division between Republic and Empire: "the Roman state continues with one clear modification, the rise of the *princeps*" (34). In this, as in much else, Velleius followed the Tiberian line. Tiberius found controlling memory of great importance. An anecdote of Seneca, with which the book opens (1), is illustrative: when Tiberius was approached by an old acquaintance who asked 'meministi', his answer was "non memini [...] quid fuerim" (Sen. Ben. 5.25.2): "It was the emperor's wish to forget" (*optanda erat oblivio*). Equally, the trial for treason of Cremutius Cordus, whose history was too flattering of Brutus and Cassius (26-27, 32-33). This imperial fascination, Gowing argues, explains the historical character of most of Tiberian literature, "by

definition explicitly designed to promote memory" (32). Valerius Maximus fits this pattern; his work emphasises how the stability that Tiberius (and Augustus) brought allows the permanence of Roman moral values. Distinctions between past and present are minimised (53). Of course, for both Velleius and Valerius Maximus, opponents of the first *princeps* and his adoptive father are potentially problematic. This is solved by "seemingly small tweakings of memory" (61); Cicero's death is, for Velleius, wholly the fault of Mark Antony, whilst Valerius Maximus includes Cato in his section of *libertas*, but takes away any connotations to his opposition to Caesar. In Tiberian (and Augustan) times, it was important to claim the Republican heritage.

Under Trajan, however, matters had changed. Tacitus can ask openly "how many were left who had seen the Republic" (*quotus quisque reliquus, qui rem publicam vidisset*) (Tac. Ann. 1.3.7), showing how "the principate of Augustus marked the demise of the Republic" (159). The view of the Republic had been transformed dramatically from Velleius' to Tacitus' time. The transformation is exemplified in Seneca's writing; Republican *exempla* are still of use when Seneca writes under Claudius, but he omits them almost entirely when writing under Nero in the 60's, this, Gowing argues, "finally suggests a movement away from the moral universe of the Republic" (76). Under Nero there are no longer suggestions that the Republic may be restored. Only Lucan dwells on the Republican past - and in an extensive discussion, Gowing argues that the emphasis on memory in the *Pharsalia* was a reaction to "a political agenda that sought to devalue the past" (100). By Trajan's time, the Republic was clearly something of the past. Gowing sees both Tacitus' *Dialogus* and Pliny's *Panegyric* as reflecting "the reality of a political system that is accepted for what it is, a Principate, not the Republic" (130). Gowing rather takes these texts at face value, and scathes over the problems of sincerity and 'doublespeak', which form inherent part of their build-up. [3] Still, he is surely right that by the time of Trajan rhetoric has changed, and that the new rhetoric was visible in the Forum of Trajan.

Pliny's *Panegyric* had already placed Trajan at the centre of attention - beyond any Republican *exempla*. Likewise, the emperor was of the utmost centrality in the Forum that celebrated his victories: "it made nods to the past, but only in the service of venerating the man who constructed it" (148). The Forum of Trajan is so overpowering that it simply eclipses Augustus' neighbouring construction. Gowing uses the well-known description of Constantius' II visit to Rome in AD 357 (Amm. Marc. 16.10.15) to illustrate the point: "entirely erased from the landscape [...] is the Forum of Augustus" (150). Trajan's monument - and by implication that what it monumentalises - is so much bigger and better than anything before it, that it can ignore the Republican past. This makes for enormous contrast with the adjoining Forum of Augustus, which aims to place Augustus squarely within Republican memory, though, as Gowing argues, it is a very selective Republican memory, excluding "those whom the new regime claimed had thought to disrupt it" (145). Where Trajan could ignore the Republican past, Augustus had to rewrite it to be placed within it. Gowing's reconstruction of the *Forum Augustum* as an attempt to "replace one narrative of Roman history with another" (145) is surely right at one level, but ignores another level at which the Forum memorialises shifting histories. For there are ambiguities surrounding what the Forum officially commemorates. Ultimately, the temple of Mars Ultor came to house the Parthian standards, but in some accounts (Suet. Aug. 29 and Ovid, *Fasti* 5.569-96) the temple was originally vowed at Philippi to avenge Caesar's murder. [4] Thus, the Forum simultaneously celebrates Augustus' ancestry and victories. Much attention did go to making a "canonical list of acceptable Republican *exempla*" (144), which was already found in the *Aeneid's* parade of famous Romans (6.725-886) and which influenced Velleius' *History*. But there was never any doubt that it first and foremost celebrated Augustus. From that point of view, there are similarities between the two adjacent Fora as well.

Gowing shows convincingly how in the early Empire the Republic was an essential part of Roman collective memory, and how shifts in the way it was remembered mark shifts in the ideological framework of the Principate. As he argues: "no one who wished to become a successful *princeps* could afford to ignore the past" (152). The past, however, changed over time. When there was enough imperial past, Republican history became less important.

Notes:

[1] I would like to mention especially Denis Feeney: *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts and Beliefs*, Cambridge 1998, and Catherine Edwards: *Writing Rome: Textual Approaches to the City*, Cambridge 1996, both also used by Gowing.

[2] Of key importance remains Maurice Halbwachs: *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris 1925. See also Coser's comprehensive translation of Halbwachs's work: *On Collective Memory*, Chicago 1992. Gowing's discussion of the role of monuments in (collective) memory is much influenced by J. Young: *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning in Europe, Israel and America*, New Haven 1993. The notions are applied to antiquity by J. Small / J. Tatum: *Memory and the study of classical antiquity*, in: *Helios* 22 (1995), 149-77 and to Rome by J. Farrell: *The phenomenology of memory in Roman culture*, in: *CJ* 92 (1997), 373-383. The role of memory in the Roman Republic was recently explored by Uwe Walter: *Memoria und res publica. Zur Geschichtskultur im republikanischen Rom*, Frankfurt a. M. 2004, which appeared too late for Gowing to incorporate. See also Gowing's review in *BMCR*, URL: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2005/2005-07-56.html> and the review by Wolfgang Blösel, in: *sehepunkte* 5 (2005), Nr. 11 [15.11.2005], URL: <http://www.sehepunkte.de/2005/11/7422.html>.

[3] See on this Shadi Bartsch's wonderful *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge, Mass. 1994), especially chapters 4 and 5.

[4] The argument is well set out in Martin Spannagel: *Exemplaria Principis. Untersuchungen zu Entstehung und Ausstattung des Augustusforums* (1999), 79-85 with the review by John Rich in *BMCR*, URL: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2002/2002-03-21.html>.

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